


National Guard ACMA Discusses Reserve Component's Acquisition Role in Current Army Operations

Elizabeth Connell



On Aug. 5, 2005, Thomas H.E. Drinkwater, National Guard Acquisition Career Management Advocate (ACMA) and Chief, Joint Information Technology Human Capital Management Office, met with *Army AL&T* Magazine to discuss the Guard's role in current Army operations and acquisition processes.

Soldiers from Company A, 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment, Texas Army National Guard (NG) conduct insurgent suppression training near Bagram, Afghanistan, June 16, 2005. More than 40 percent of the forces on the ground today in the theater of operations are from the Reserve Component. (U.S. Army photo by SPC Harold Fields.)

Q. The National Guard (NG) is unique among the services because it is both a federal and a state organization. How does this dual structure affect the Guard's acquisition processes?

A. The Guard is both a state and federal organization — it belongs to the state governor until it is federalized. When the Guard is in state status, they follow federal procurement rules and regulations, such as *DEARS* [*Defense Federal Acquisition Regulations Supplement*]. However, they may also follow any state acquisition regulations at the same time, which are often quicker, more flexible and less intrusive than federal procedures. So, in fact, they almost have to follow two sets of rules.

There are two acquisition career fields that are prevalently found in the states — contracting and purchasing. And, since DOD established the facility engineering acquisition career field a few years ago, our facility engineer workforce could potentially outnumber contracting

people in the field. NG facility engineers are adept at operating in a multi-stakeholder environment, balancing various regulations, statutes and fiscal years to complete projects. Officers with this type of flexibility are certainly a valuable asset within DOD systems acquisition.

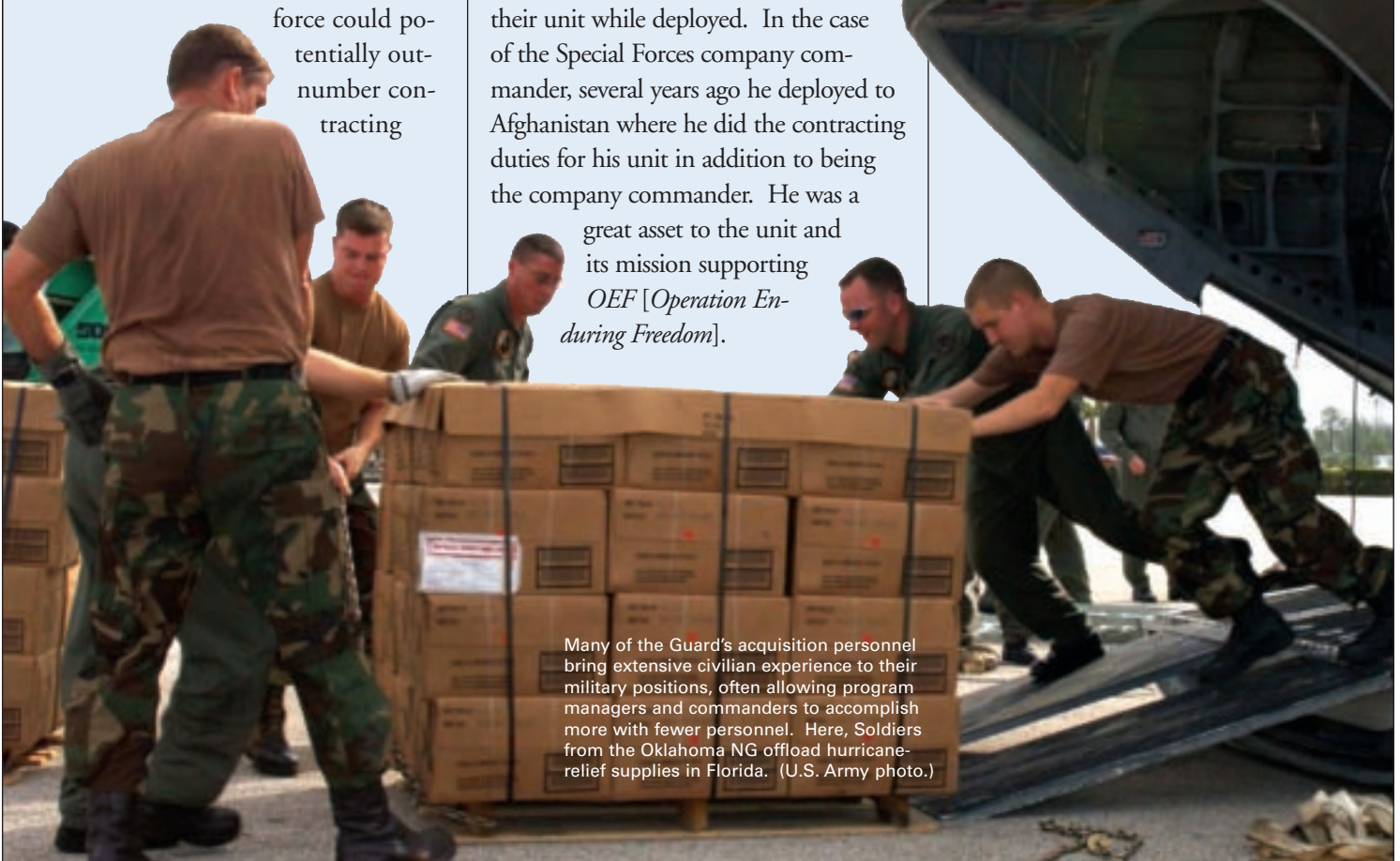
We also have a good-sized acquisition workforce in the field who during the week are technicians, i.e., hold a GS-grade position, and on weekends fill military roles that don't necessarily correlate to their civilian jobs. So there are subtle nuances that really present some interesting challenges to peoples' experiences in both their civilian and military roles. We have a supervisory contracting officer who is a Special Forces company commander on weekends so, when he deploys, he deploys as a Special Forces company commander, not as a contracting officer.

Guardsmen with civilian contracting experience use that experience to help their unit while deployed. In the case of the Special Forces company commander, several years ago he deployed to Afghanistan where he did the contracting duties for his unit in addition to being the company commander. He was a great asset to the unit and its mission supporting OEF [*Operation Enduring Freedom*].

When these technicians deploy, it leaves gaps in their civilian organizations, presenting some challenges. When units deploy out of a state, adjacent states provide mutual support if necessary. Contracting officers from one state have provided support to another state to fill in the gaps.

Q. Given the Guard's large presence in Iraq, what percentage of *Operation Iraqi Freedom* contracts is the NG responsible for? Generally speaking, does the NG's acquisition workforce focus more on procuring items for domestic or international operations?

A. Right now, we have about 10 people — officers and NCOs [non-commissioned officers] — between Iraq and Afghanistan in contracting



Many of the Guard's acquisition personnel bring extensive civilian experience to their military positions, often allowing program managers and commanders to accomplish more with fewer personnel. Here, Soldiers from the Oklahoma NG offload hurricane-relief supplies in Florida. (U.S. Army photo.)

positions under the Contract Operations-Iraq and the PARC [Principal Assistant Responsible for Contracting] offices. They bring a great wealth of experience to the PARC offices because of their vast civilian contracting expertise.

An Army Guardsman from Alabama, CPT Theresa Glasgow, is now Chief of the Regional Contracting Center in Talil. One of the first contracting actions she was given was to rebuild the prison, a multimillion-dollar contracting action, and she was right out of the chute almost. We also have MAJ Eric Shuler up in Mosul. He's from the 42nd Infantry Division, New Jersey NG, and he's been doing a great job. We just deployed SFC Patricia McDonald from the Florida NG to Afghanistan. She has more than 10 years of contracting experience between the Army and the Navy — she works for the Navy construction office in Florida as a civilian. So here we have an E-7 who has the experience of a major or lieutenant colonel over in

Afghanistan doing contracting. You don't normally find that wealth of experience.

Another interesting piece of information — and this is history — is that CW4 Tom Dahlgren from the Nebraska NG is deploying to Iraq as a contracting officer. He is the first Army NG Warrent Officer to be deployed as a contingency contracting officer. And, as far as I know, he is the first DA individual warrent officer to be deployed as a contracting officer. Dahlgren has more than 22 years of contracting experience. In civilian life, he is the GS-13 Supervisory Contract Specialist for the state of Nebraska, U.S. Property and Fiscal Office, NG. He brings his civilian National Guard experience to the table with him, in uniform. The people in Iraq are just

waiting for him to get there. We're pretty proud of that, as well as all the rest of our mobilized forces. They're all doing great.

I can't answer the question about what percentage of contracts the Guard is responsible for because, it is my understanding, when a contracting officer arrives in country, they get stripped out of their unit and put into the PARC office in Iraq. Our NG officers and NCOs are part of that — when they arrive in country, if all goes according to plan, they get stripped away from their units and assigned to the PARC office.

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Q. How many NG personnel are involved in contracting, or does the Guard rely heavily on DOD civilian contracting personnel?

A. We have a rather large number of NG contracting personnel — about 330 full-time Army Guard contracting and purchasing technicians in the 54 states, territories and the District of Columbia [DC]. And we have a full-time contracting staff in the Joint Headquarters — which is Joint blue and green. We have *Title 5* Army and Air Force civilians, *Title 10* Air Force and Army Guard officers and a couple of NCOs — about 20 military personnel — in that office. The contracting office here in the Guard's headquarters does contracting for both the Army and Air Guard headquarters. The 330 technicians throughout the states do the contracting for the Army Guard in each state. The Air Guard number is just under 200. We have about 300 Army Guard and about 120 Air Guard technicians in the facility engineer career



The NG is frequently called upon to coordinate and assist in humanitarian and disaster relief operations. Here, MAJ Roger Alsop, Missouri NG 35th Engineer Brigade, takes a break with students in Fallujah, Iraq, Aug. 19, 2005. Alsop is a project engineer helping to refurbish local area schools with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region Central District. (U.S. Army photo by Norris Jones.)



The NG defends the United States both at home and abroad. Today, more than 109,000 National Guardsmen are on active duty worldwide, with a significant portion serving in Iraq. Here, Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment, Illinois Army National Guard, search for insurgents in Abu Ghraib, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo by SPC Jeremy Crisp.)

field. The full-time technicians and headquarters staff do most of the contracting. There are some contract offloads to other federal agencies but we try to do what we can in house.

Q. Do the Army NG and the Air NG share an acquisition workforce or do they have separate and specialized staffs?

A. In the States, the Army Guard and the Air Guard generally have separate contracting offices because there may be an Air Guard air base that isn't located with the U.S. Property and Fiscal Office.

Q. Given that many National Guardsmen have long and successful civilian careers in addition to their Guard experience, does the NG's acquisition workforce bring any special or distinctive skills to the Army's acquisition workforce?

A. The Guard's acquisition personnel often do have professional civilian careers and diverse backgrounds that don't show up on an Acquisition Career Record Brief but that complement their Guard duties, and often allow program managers to accomplish more with fewer personnel. For example, one of our guys, MAJ James Helm, is currently the assistant product manager [APM] for homeland defense activities within the Joint Tactical Radio System (JTRS) Joint Waveform Program Office (JWPO). Helm has been in the acquisition field since 1985, on both the private and government sides. Although his program management experience as a facility engineer allows him to efficiently coordinate actions between his program office and other federal, state and local agencies that are required to communicate together for homeland defense, his contracting experience has been especially useful.

Neither his peers nor his immediate supervisors have contracting experience so they rely heavily on the program's contracting personnel, who are stretched thin by today's high demands. Helm has drawn on his contracting experience to improve JTRS JWPO's acquisition strategies and ensure key intellectual property issues were addressed before contract award. His understanding of fiscal and contracting processes have enabled him to resolve payment issues and other disputes after contract award.

Helm's NG acquisition experience has directly prepared him to contribute to DOD's acquisition efforts across multiple agencies. His story is just one example of how NG acquisition officers are well suited to address the homeland defense requirements of agencies that aren't yet playing a direct role in DOD systems acquisitions, such as the

Departments of Homeland Security and Justice.

The advantage of sharing Guard acquisition personnel with other agencies is a two-way street — the Guard clearly benefits from exposing its acquisition officers to the rigors of working within the greater defense acquisition framework. The challenge is to balance these career-broadening opportunities with personnel shortages.

Q. According to National Guard Bureau (NGB) Chief LTG H Steven Blum, as of Jan. 1, 2005, there are more than 109,000 Army and Air National Guardsmen on active duty worldwide, with an additional 9,700 alerted and awaiting mobilization. More than 40 percent of the forces on the ground in Iraq are Guard and Reserve. Clearly the Guard plays a critical role in the success of the global war on terrorism (GWOT), but it is also key to successful operations both at home and elsewhere around the world. Is it difficult for the Guard to adequately allocate resources and personnel to each operation?

A. We face the same challenges for allocating resources and personnel as the Army does, or any of the services do. However, 2 years ago when LTG Blum took over the NG, he made an agreement with the NG Adjutants General Association and DOD that Guard forces would be developed with a management model that would adequately provide forces to each governor

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as well as to homeland security missions, while simultaneously supporting GWOT and the combatant commanders' needs. At all times, we want to have at least 50 percent of the forces available to the governors in each state.

It's a new way of doing business. There are challenges, but it really is working like a well-oiled machine. We've had great successes supporting such events as G8 conferences, the Democratic and Republican national conventions and a Joint security mission conducted along the Canadian border with New York, Vermont and New Hampshire in 2004.

Bottom line is the NG acquisition workforce is ready, relevant and fully able.

Q. Other services engaged in the GWOT have recently had trouble meeting recruiting goals. Given the nature of its dual role — to defend and protect the United States at home and abroad — has the NG experienced any difficulties recruiting or retaining personnel?



As the NG's ACMA, Thomas H.E. Drinkwater is responsible for the training, education and career development of all Army and Air NG civilian and military acquisition personnel. Drinkwater first joined the Alaska NG in 1973, after serving more than 3 years as an active duty Army Field Artillery Officer. (U.S. Army photo by Elizabeth Connell.)

A. We face the same challenges that the active components do, but March 2005 was our best recruiting month in 14 months. We think we'll continue to be successful in recruiting.

Q. In 2002, then Secretary of the Army Thomas E. White introduced the Army NG Restructuring Initiative to convert existing heavy and light combat structure to new organizations that better support combatant commanders. Has that conversion begun, and, if so, how is it progressing?

A. We have begun the conversion — with great enthusiasm — and we are progressing along with the Army's schedule. The NG is a full player with the Army and we are all converting together.

Q. The 56th Brigade of Pennsylvania will be the first Army NG Stryker Brigade. How is that going?

A. I've talked to some of our Pennsylvania Guardsmen and they are very enthusiastic about being the first Army NG Stryker Brigade. They are training up for it, they are getting ready to receive the equipment and it's going well.

Q. As the NG restructures to a modular and expeditionary force, is it receiving adequate resources to make these changes?

A. The NG is resourced the same way Congress resources all the services, so we have the same challenges as everybody else.

Q. How is the Air NG transforming?

A. The Air Guard is transforming in concert with the active Air Force. The Guard has made the commitment that along with the transformation there would be at least one manned — and



The NG is providing critical support to the GWOT. Tennessee National Guardsman SFC Joel Gibbons, 1st Squadron, 278th Regimental Combat Team, 42nd Infantry Division, stands guard while an Iraqi youth provides information on a weapons cache found near the Iranian border. (U.S. Army photo by SGT Matthew Acosta.)

“manned” is important here because there are unmanned systems — flying unit per state. At one point, the Air Guard would divest itself of obsolete missions and equipment. Of course, that change would certainly be made in full concert with the Air Force.

Q. How does the NG interact with the program executive offices (PEOs) and the program management offices (PMOs)?

A. We try to work very actively with the PEOs and PMOs. We have six APMs who are Army Guard officers located in PMOs. One is in Apache, one is in PM Soldier, one is in PM JTRS and three are in the PM RCAS [Reserve Component Automation System] office, under PEO EIS [Enterprise Information Systems]. We also have liaison officers at Army Materiel Command Headquarters; Communications-Electronics Command Life Cycle Management Command (LCMC); Aviation and Missile Command LCMC; Tank-automotive and Armaments Command LCMC; and PEO Simulation, Training and Instrumentation. We provide Defense Acquisition University [DAU] training to those officers so they can be familiar with the PMs located in their geographical area, what they do and how they can support the Guard.

work in their organization. Although we would love to support every request we get, we have some resource constraints. We do try to provide support to those PMs and PEOs that are fielding equipment to the Guard because we want to continue to have that close relationship. We also currently have seven PMs who are Army Guard officers. LTC Dorothy E. Taneyhill is PM Fixed Wing in Huntsville, AL (see related article on Page 48); LTC Carol R. Solesbee is PM Forklifts in Detroit [MI]; and COL John Fellows is our first O-6 board-select PM with Ground-based Missile Defense. We’re proud that our officers have been selected as PMs.

Q. NGB is participating in the U.S. Army Acquisition Support Center’s (ASC’s) Wounded Soldier Program. How is that going?

A. We currently have one Soldier participating in ASC’s Wounded Soldier Program here at NGB, SFC Denis Viau. We think he’ll do great in the program. He is an active Army Soldier from the 11B Infantry Platoon who suffered a severe leg injury from a mortar round in Iraq and is now a below-the-knee amputee. Viau has 17 years of service and was looking forward to a career in law enforcement upon retirement from active duty.

We are highly interested in having NG officers work closely with PMs and PEOs who are fielding equipment to NG units. We regularly get requests from PMs and PEOs asking if we can provide an officer to

Through the Wounded Soldier Program, and with a commitment from the Acquisition Career Management Officer, he is now looking forward to serving as an acquisition professional and putting his infantry experience to use in acquisition programs.

Viau’s acquisition training includes taking DAU courses to become certified in more than one acquisition career field, completing a bachelor’s degree and receiving lots of on-the-job training. After this training and exposure to basic acquisition functions, Viau will be reassigned to a PMO in the National Capital Region to gain additional acquisition programmatic experience and higher certification levels. Given the training, education and experiences Viau will receive, he will develop into a valuable acquisition community member for continued uniformed service, or as a civilian member should he choose to retire in 3 years.

We are also looking to expand this program to provide the Guard’s own wounded Soldiers and Airmen with great career opportunities.

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